

would do it, I would ask him to consider the fact that his colleagues, the majority of whom did support it, are now going to be delayed in getting those resources out the door.

Now, maybe that is what he wants. Maybe he is playing a game of the calendar. He is just hoping that those nominees won't ever get into these spots, that it will take forever for us to get these programs implemented. Our economy can't wait for that. Our economy and the investments that we all decided to make can't wait for this kind of gamesmanship. The small businesses that my colleague from Montana talked about can't wait for that gamesmanship.

I guarantee you those Secretaries will be in front of the Commerce Committee in the new year at some point in time. I guarantee it. That is what happens around here. I am pretty sure they will be asked these questions. I am sure they are asked these questions every single day. I am pretty sure they would take a call from my colleague tonight or tomorrow. I am pretty sure they would have the input from him that he would want to give in these situations.

But this is an issue about whether you are for the infrastructure investment and whether you are for making that a reality by having the people whom it takes to implement it. And if you don't have CFOs, if you don't have the Administrators of the Agencies, if you don't have the people who are targeted to do the investment, I am not sure how you can do it.

One of those nominees, Arun Venkataraman, currently serves as a counselor to the Secretary of Commerce on trade and international matters. He has more than 20 years of experience in working on these issues and is somebody who could benefit us in this analysis of the challenges that we are facing to get our products into these markets and get them into these markets quickly.

So I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to make the same request with respect to Executive Calendar No. 586, Arun Venkataraman to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Reserving the right to object, the one thing that has not been addressed is, if this were so important, why didn't my colleagues go to the majority leader—same party—and ask him to file cloture on these nominees?

I still also have never been told why, when I have been asking for this for weeks, these two Secretaries won't show up and tell my citizens why they can't solve the supply chain problem. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I think we have had a good discussion of exactly what these individuals—the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Transportation—have been doing. They have been making their deputies available for conversations about supply chains. We have had supply chain hearings. We will continue to address this issue. I am pretty sure they will take his phone call.

I am pretty sure that the reason we are out here is because when the other side of the aisle holds up so many nominees, there are only so many cloture motions that you can file. But I guess we will be here this weekend, and we will find out exactly how many cloture motions and how long it will take to continue to get these nominees.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

#### ELECTIONS

Ms. HASSAN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a grave threat that we face, a threat to the very idea of America.

By law, every 2 years, Americans cast their votes for Federal office on a Tuesday in early November. Like many Americans, I have always treasured that day. I have gone to my polling place, and I have cast my vote. When I have left, usually from a townhall or a school, I have done so with the confidence that the votes would be counted, a winner declared, and my town, my State, and my country would move forward, accepting the results not because of which candidates won but because of our confidence that the election system was run impartially by people who believe in our democracy and believe that democracy is about free, fair, and impartially administered elections.

This great democracy of ours depends on the existence of a free and fair casting and telling of the votes and the public's acceptance of that result. That is the prerequisite for a functioning democracy, and every other piece of our society, from our economy to our national security, depends on it.

Without free, fair, and impartially administered elections, the United States of America as we know it would not exist. Yet, right now, our beloved democracy is under attack.

In States around the country, partisan lawmakers are proposing to ignore properly cast votes, essentially trying to throw out the votes and silence the voices of those with whom they disagree. These partisans are more concerned about losing power than protecting the rights of citizens and preserving the foundation of our country.

Here in Washington, a set of arcane Senate rules are being used as an excuse not to act. This cannot stand. We must change the rules to allow a simple majority of this body, as our

Founders intended, to pass laws that will protect the right to vote and protect American democracy.

In States across the country, partisan politicians are calling into question the sacred American right to free, fair, and impartially administered elections. These politicians are trying to reject the will of the people, trying to interfere with elections and, yes, overturn results. This is not an idle threat; it is happening right now.

As the Presiding Officer well knows, earlier this year in Georgia, a new law enabled the legislature to seize control of the State election board, allowing elected legislators to install a partisan majority beholden to that legislature, with the ability to suspend and replace local election officials.

In Arizona, legislators have proposed a bill that would enable the State legislature to override an election certification with a simple majority vote.

These efforts threaten the integrity of our election system. That, in turn, threatens our peace, stability, and certainty—the very rule of law that makes individual liberty, a vibrant economy, and, yes, the peaceful transfer of power possible.

There is no single aspect of American life that isn't related to free, fair, and impartially administered elections. We have public schools, safe neighborhoods, access to healthcare, support for small businesses, and access to the great outdoors all because ordinary Americans can make their voices heard and hold their government—a government of, by, and for the people—accountable.

In America, as imperfect as we are, everybody has the opportunity to succeed because everyone has the opportunity to vote. But that all changes when our election system is corrupted by politicians who are more interested in clinging to power than being responsive to the people whom they were elected to represent.

When those in power work to create a partisan electoral system where the focus is not on ensuring that every vote is counted but is instead on ensuring a predetermined outcome, those in power become less and less responsive to the will of the people. And as citizens become disenfranchised and angry, those in power increasingly rely on authoritarian methods to stay in power. That is the road that we risk going down if this systematic undermining of our elections and our democracy continues.

Authoritarian regimes like China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea would like nothing more than to see our great American experiment fail, to see Members of this Congress stand by while our democracy withers on the vine. When Americans lose trust in our democracy, when the integrity of our elections is thrown into doubt, neither Republicans nor Democrats win; our enemies do.

But we in the Senate can stop this threat to our democracy by acting to

protect the fundamental right to vote. The Constitution gives Congress the power to oversee Federal elections. That means that Congress has the authority to protect democracy and the right to vote, and we have a constitutional and moral obligation to do so. That was part of the oath I swore, to "support and defend the Constitution" and "bear true faith and allegiance to the same."

Congress has a responsibility to act now to ensure that the right of every American to vote is never taken away. We must pass legislation to prevent partisan politicians from rejecting the will of the people and overturning election results. Because that effort here in Congress is being blocked by a minority, which is abusing its power, I believe the time has come to change the Senate rules to allow a straight up-or-down majority vote on this fundamental issue of democracy.

Our Founders understood that our democracy was a fragile thing that we would always have to fight to protect. Across every generation, Americans have signed up to serve not just to protect our physical security but to protect our freedom.

American soldiers, like my father, fought in World War II. They saved the world from Hitler, preserving freedom around the globe. My dad fought in the Battle of the Bulge. When I was growing up and we were having breakfast, Dad would sometimes look up at my brother, my sister, and me, and he would say, "So what are you going to do for freedom today?" Sounds like kind of a big question to ask a kid, but he was serious because every single American has a responsibility to help protect our democracy, including and perhaps especially U.S. Senators.

We must change the Senate rules to protect the right to vote because if we don't, we face a very different kind of election day than the one we have now. If the partisans who are attacking our democracy have their way, our Tuesday election day in early November will be different. We will wake up, cast our vote, drop our kids at school, and go to work. We will tune back in at the end of the day to see the election results, only to learn that the vote tally is being ignored, that our votes don't matter much. We will learn that our legislatures are going to throw out the results and pick their own winner. We will see an election day that is a charade just like in countries where democracy doesn't exist.

Our democracy is too important to allow a minority of this body to let it slip away. We must pass legislation to protect American democracy. Our country depends on it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate

proceed to the following nominations en bloc: 622, 629, 630, 595, 596, 607, 608, and all the nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Army, Foreign Service, and Space Force; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the en bloc nominations of Thomas Barrett, of Wisconsin, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg; Shannon Corless, of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of the Treasury; Kurt D. DelBene, of Washington, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Information and Technology); Lisa W. Wang, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce; Maria Louise Lago, of New York, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade; the following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601: To be Vice Admiral Rear Adm. Collin P. Green; the following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 154 and 601: To be Admiral Adm. Christopher W. Grady; PN1461 ARMY nomination of Todd E. Moszer, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of December 7, 2021; PN726 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (35) beginning Arthur W. Brown, and ending Peter C. Trenchard, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of June 22, 2021; PN728-1 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (153) beginning Rahel Aboye, and ending Kyra Turner Zogbekor, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of June 22, 2021; PN1317 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (228) beginning Adam Jeffrey Abramson, and ending Jessica Torres Yurcheshen, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of October 27, 2021; PN1318 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (6) beginning Mario D. Ambrosino, and ending Cristobal Zepeda, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of October 27, 2021; PN1320 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (53) beginning Nicholas R. Abbate, and ending Maria E. Snarski, which nominations were received by

the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of October 27, 2021; and PN1463 SPACE FORCE nominations (8) beginning MARC D. DANIELS, and ending JAY M. STEINGOLD, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of December 7, 2021?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

##### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

##### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for the information of the Senate, while I was necessarily absent for the confirmation votes of Ramin Toloui and Rashad Hussain, I want the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to reflect my support for their confirmations. Had I been present, I would have voted in the affirmative.

Ramin Toloui is nominated to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs. He is the professor of the Practice for International Finance at Stanford University, and the Tad and Diane Taube Policy Fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. His teaching and research focus on international economic policy, financial crises, and the economic impact of artificial intelligence. He began his career as a civil servant at the Department of the Treasury. His nomination was favorably reported by the Foreign Relations Committee, and he is superbly qualified to hold this position.

Rashad Hussain is nominated to be Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom. He is a senior counsel at the Department of Justice's National Security Division. He previously served as President Obama's Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation—OIC—as U.S. Special Envoy for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, and as Deputy Associate White House Counsel. In his role as OIC Envoy, Professor Hussain helped develop U.S. policy and deepen and expand partnerships with Muslim-majority countries, civil society organizations, and the OIC, the world's second largest multilateral organization after the UN. As Special Envoy for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, Professor Hussain led an interagency body that worked with international partners to amplify credible narratives in countering terrorist propaganda. Having been reported favorably by the Foreign Relations Committee, I have no doubt of his qualifications for this position.